CONCLUSIONS

PRIORITY ISSUES: The public workshop exercise of prioritizing a series of planning issues was undertaken to get a sense within each corridor of what the key issues are, but also to compare the corridors with each other. Certainly these are not statistically valid observations, and therefore it is only possible to try to make some broad generalizations. The results are not surprising, and there was enough commonality to identify the following groupings:[1]

Transportation: In the two most densely developed corridors, East Bay and Blackstone Valley, land use issues were less of a priority and Transit and Traffic congestion were the two top issues in both corridors.

Land Use: Similarly, in the two corridors which contain some fairly rural areas and pressure for development, the opposite was true. Land Use and Community Character were selected as the most important two issues in the South County and West Bay Corridors.

Transitional Areas: The two corridors that had the greatest diversity of land, containing urban as well as rural areas, had mixed results. The East West Corridor, from Providence to Foster/Glocester, had Community Character and Traffic Congestion as their top two issues. Likewise, the Aquidneck Island Corridor which contains the very built up Middletown and Newport area as well as the rural town of Little Compton listed Land Use and Traffic Congestion as the two most important issues.

It is also noteworthy to mention the other issues that did not rank very highly. Pedestrian, Bicycle, and Freight fall into this category. When forced to rank them in priority order, these items fell to the bottom, because perhaps for some people, these issues may not touch their lives on a daily basis. The table below documents the results of this exercise and contains some summary data.

[1] This exercise was not completed for the Interstate Corridor.

ISSUE PRIORITIZATION EXERCISE

Issue	East/West	South County	Aquidneck Island	East Bay	West Bay	Blackstone	SUM	PERCENT	RANK	RANGE	#1's
Traffic/Congst/AccsMgt	13	6	8	4	6	6	43	20%	1	33-14%	2
Transit	1	5	3	5	6	7	27	12%	4	22-2%	2
Environment	10	1	3	1	4	4	23	10%	5	17-3%	0
Grwth/Sprl/Land Use	7	9	4	2	8	5	35	16%	3	25-8%	1
Community/Aesthetic	12	8	3	2	11	5	41	19%	2	25-8%	1
Safety	8	3	1	2	5	1	20	9%	6	13-3%	0
Pedestrian	1	3	1	3	2	2	12	5%	7	13-2%	0
Bike	3	1	0	3	2	2	11	5%	8	13-0%	0
Freight	5	0	1	2	0	0	8	4%	9	8-0%	0
SUM	**60**	**36**	**24**	**24**	**44**	**32**	**220**				

RECOMMENDATIONS: As RIDOT or other entities move forward with more detailed individual corridor studies, the following recommendations are offered:

Frontage Roads: The roadways selected to be included in this corridor study were the higher volume major arterials that carried through traffic in addition to local traffic. As the workshops progressed, the role of secondary roads parallel to a major highway was touched upon. Two examples are Route 1A in South County, which runs parallel to Route 1, and Route 3 from Westerly to West Warwick, which runs parallel to Interstate 95. It was not possible to study this relationship within the scope of this planning initiative; however when more detailed corridor studies are undertaken for these two corridors, the concept that certain highways can serve as "frontage roads" for limited access highways should be investigated further.

Interstate Travel: Although every effort was made to look beyond Rhode Island's borders in identifying these travel corridors, there is much to be learned about the true nature of interstate travel and commuting in particular. Destinations and employers in Connecticut (Foxwoods, Pfizer, and General Dynamics in particular) have a very significant impact on travel in South County. The same phenomenon occurs between Blackstone Valley and the Boston-Worcester area, and between the East Bay and Aquidneck Island regions of Rhode Island and Southeastern Massachusetts. There

does not appear to be a great deal of commuting between Providence County and northeast Connecticut, but there is a significant amount of freight traffic along the East West Corridor. The Interstate 95 Corridor functions on two levels: as a conduit for intrastate trips and as part of the Northeast Corridor. Current mapping and modeling limitations make this a difficult task, but with the recent release of 2000 Census journey to work data, more effort toward understanding and planning for interstate travel should be undertaken.

Addition of Route 117: Route 117 is an east-west high-volume arterial that runs from the Connecticut border in Coventry to the shore of Narragansett Bay in Warwick. This was not identified as one of the seven primary travel corridors, but this roadway and the bike path that runs parallel to it should be considered for inclusion in the East West Corridor, perhaps replacing Routes 12 and 14 which are lower in volume.

Environmental Issues: Air quality protection is built into the transportation planning process at a metropolitan area level (the entire state in the case of Rhode Island). Additionally, project level environmental concerns are addressed through the Environmental Impact Statement process as prescribed by the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA). A point was raised during this planning initiative that a corridor level planning framework may be appropriate for water quality and stormwater issues to be addressed. In certain corridors, this could be accomplished through early coordination with watershed organizations.

Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS): Limited access highways in Rhode Island, including the Interstate 95 Corridor in the metropolitan Providence area, now boast a fairly well-developed network of traffic monitoring cameras and other electronic equipment such that operators of a 24 hour Transportation Management Center (TMC) can respond quickly to changes in traffic conditions and traffic incidents. There are likely other areas of the state, including non-Interstate highways, that can derive benefits and congestion relief from ITS solutions. It is difficult to implement ITS at a project level, but to fully realize the potential that ITS has to offer, technology enhancements should be mainstreamed into the transportation planning process at a corridor level.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: During the course of the planner workshops and public workshops, some issues emerged that were beyond the scope of the Travel Corridor Planning Initiative, but nonetheless impact the transportation system and are worthy of further study.

Local Property Tax: More than once, the issue of school funding through property taxes arose. In many communities, the school system consumes 50-70% of the municipal budget whose primary revenues are from residential

property taxes. Local elected officials, in an effort to expand and diversify the local base and avoid residential property tax increases, look toward commercial and industrial development. The subsequent increase in retail activity and employment may ease municipal budget woes, but they also may overburden the transportation system and create traffic congestion where none existed before. Moving forward, it is important in any land use discussion to acknowledge and address the relationship between local property taxes and land use decisions.

State Surplus Property: State rights-of-way contain many adjoining slivers and larger parcels of land that may have been acquired for the purpose of roadway construction or improvements (or any number of reasons) but are not needed for roadway function. These publicly owned parcels often serve to improve roadway aesthetics as well as limit development and curb cuts, and buffer environmental impacts. On the other hand, local and state officials may perceive this land as an opportunity to generate cash or tax revenue. There is no current systematic inventory of state owned property, along rights-of-way or otherwise, so the scope of this problem is unknown. Improved staffing and review procedures within the State surplus property disposal system would provide greater opportunities to protect some of these parcels where they indeed improve roadway function, preserve capacity, or provide other community benefits. As more communities move toward GIS and electronic parcel data, it should become easier to generate a state property inventory and undertake an analysis of the properties that should remain in public ownership.